

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

181005Z May 05

UNCLAS SANAA 001328

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [KJUS](#) [YM](#)

SUBJECT: LIMITED KORAN DESECRATION PROTESTS IN SANAA

REF: A. SANAA 1305

[B](#). SANAA 1301

[1](#)1. Summary: The recent Newsweek piece alleging desecration of a Koran in Guantanamo Bay sparked small protests among students at Sanaa's universities. The non-violent protests were contained by police and were not covered by the local press. Despite strong opposition to many U.S. policies, most young people in Sanaa are more concerned at this time with the quality of education than any other issue. End summary.

[1](#)2. An eyewitness reported small demonstrations at the New Sanaa University of about 100-150 students. Many were holding placards exclaiming "Don't disgrace the Holy Koran" and other slogans, which students also chanted over a loudspeaker. The demonstrations remained peaceful, and were contained by police. There were simultaneous demonstrations at the Old Sanaa University, which were smaller in scope and heavily controlled by a riot squad checking the IDs of each student entering the campus. The eyewitness said there were no gatherings in Liberation Square, a common meeting place for political dissent.

[1](#)3. Econoff met May 15 with approximately fifty students at the National Institute for Administration, located on a separate campus from the Sanaa universities. The students at this university were unaware of any demonstrations related to the alleged Koran desecration, and believed that the protests were in response to an ongoing faculty strike at the universities. The students had stayed up studying for their exams, they said, only to find out they were cancelled, prompting the protests. No one in the group said they were planning to demonstrate and did not know anyone who would, despite universal outrage at the alleged events in Guantanamo Bay.

[1](#)4. Comment. Yemenis remain largely unaware of anti-U.S. demonstrations at Sanaa's universities, despite the fact that some small protests did take place. This can be attributed to the lack of coverage in the Yemeni press, which focused mostly on international developments (ref A). Barring future revelations, it is unlikely that protests in Yemen will continue. Despite strong emotional opposition to U.S. policy in Guantanamo Bay and strong religious tendencies among students, most young people are more concerned with their education and other immediate concerns. End comment.
Krajeski